

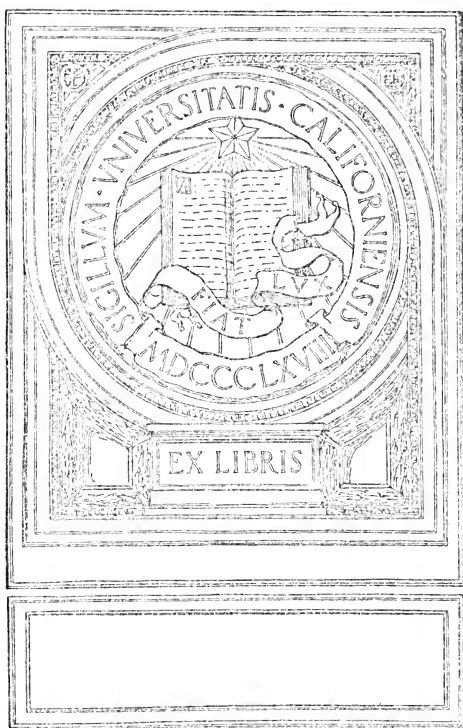
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THE POWER OF LITERATURE

AND

ITS CONNEXION WITH RELIGION:

AN ORATION,

DELIVERED

AT BRISTOL COLLEGE, JULY 23, 1834,

BEFORE

THE PHILOLOGIAN SOCIETY.

BY FRANCIS S. KEY.

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TO : MR
DIRECTOR

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ORATION.

THE invitation of a literary society connected with this institution, has placed me before this audience. Such a call, however difficult to fulfil, I found still more difficult to decline; and as no particular object, to be accomplished by the address I am requested to deliver, has been intimated to me, I have considered it a part of my duty to exercise my discretion in the choice of a subject. A literary and religious institution, for the education of youth—its friends and patrons, animated with the hope that they have commenced a work destined to promote the welfare of their race—its interesting pupils anxious to avail themselves of such advantages to fit themselves for the active scenes of life, are before me. I have been unable to think of any thing I could present more appropriate to such an occasion, than some considerations upon the power of literature and its connexion with religion.

The power of literature, perhaps above all others with which man is endowed, is most potent for good and for evil. It adds to the force of human example, gives weight and influence to opinion, and effect to effort. It is limited to no age or nation, but goes abroad, a blessing or a curse, to every land, and descends to distant generations.

The patrons of this institution have looked upon the world with the eye of Christian faith, with the sympathy of Christian hearts. They see its fields white for the harvest. They desire to send forth labourers to this harvest, who shall reap, for themselves and their fellow men, the rich fruits of happiness and glory. They desire to send forth, qualified for all the pursuits and stations of life, Christians who shall have added to their "faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge," who shall be able to adorn and defend the Gospel they profess. Are they right in conferring this dangerous power of literature upon those whom they are preparing for these high duties? May it not turn them aside from their great work, abate the zeal and ardour of their efforts, bring the world's most powerful temptations upon them, and

seduce them into the ranks of the enemy? It must be answered that it may do all this, and yet are they right.

It cannot be plausibly argued that, unconnected with the means of religious improvement, human learning is more the foe of human happiness than ignorance.

But it need not, and ought not to be thus unconnected. It may be made, and it ought to be made a powerful auxiliary in that war, which man is to wage, with all his strength, against the powers of darkness. There is no occasion to speculate upon the consequences of conferring high intellectual attainments and neglecting the "one thing needful," the care of the soul. I shall endeavour to show the consistency of religion and literature, what are their effects upon each other, and how powerfully they must bear together upon the world. I by no means put them upon any equality. The one must take high precedence, and hold supreme dominion over every thing belonging to man. The other is but a talent committed to us by our master, with the command, "occupy till I come." Man is made a new creature, by the one—informed of his destiny and duty, supplied with his motives, and animated to his work; the other gives him influence and ability for the good of others, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." To promote the Christian education of youth, is conferring upon the world a blessing above all price; to make the blessing more efficient, every human acquisition that can have power upon the world, should be brought into association with the Christian virtues.

The influence of literature upon mankind has been seen and felt in all ages, and the nature of man and his situation in this life show that it can never cease to be one of the most powerful agents in the formation of human character and in the regulation of human conduct. The Almighty has placed his intelligent creatures in intimate and necessary association and dependance upon each other. They thus acquire, as it was intended they should, often insensibly, most of those principles, habits, and feelings which govern them through life. The intercourse producing these great results is mental. The impressions are communicated through the understanding and the affections. Upon this great mass of feeling and thinking beings it is plain that ignorance can produce little effect, and that the influence of men upon each other will be, in a great measure, proportioned to their mental improvement. No man perhaps is so weak as not to be placed in circumstances which enable him to operate upon a few within his reach; but high literary attainments

claim and receive the attention of all. Men thus fitted for human intercourse have a ready passport into every social community and into every habitation of civilized man. They propose and discuss every subject connected with the interest of human beings; and they speak upon these great subjects to their fellow men of their own age and to the remotest generations. The effects thus produced it is impossible to estimate. How often has the perusal of a single book awakened the attention of its reader, roused his energies into new action, turned his thoughts into a new channel, changed the whole course and habits of his life, and enabled him in his turn to bring the force of intellectual power to bear upon the world, and communicate to hundreds and thousands like himself, the impulses he has thus received. "The good" and the evil that men do, "live after them." There are, perhaps, few persons now present, who have not received deep and abiding impressions, forming prominent points in their character and daily influencing their conduct, from the works of men who have been for years and even centuries in their graves. And this great operation of mind upon mind will go on from generation to generation. Some of its great results we see in the wonderful improvements around us, of which the world a few years since was ignorant and incredulous. What they are to be, is known only to Him who has given this power to his creatures to be improved for his glory. Is such a power as this denied to the Christian? May he not avail himself of such an aid in the course he is to run? Is it inconsistent with his character to wield such a weapon in his warfare? A mistaken opinion upon this subject certainly once prevailed in the world. Some well-meaning Christians may even yet doubt the advantages of a literary education, and we have reason to fear that there are many who, though they may not object to it, are yet indifferent to the reception of such an ally to the Christian cause. It may be useful therefore to examine this question, and determine whether the friends of religion shall avail themselves of one of the most powerful means of influencing the world, or leave it to its adversaries.

If we consider the nature and purposes of religion and literature, we shall find nothing in the claims of the one inconsistent with the acquisition of the other. On the contrary, rightly considered, the claims of the one are such as to demand the acquisition of the other.

Religion, it is said, is the influence of the Spirit upon the heart; it demands the heart, the whole heart, and makes no call upon the

understanding. This is a mistake. It is the influence of the Spirit upon the man—it demands the whole man, soul and body, heart and understanding. All are to be brought under its subjection. Every faculty and power of body and soul, of heart and mind, that it finds in man, or that man has the means of acquiring, is called forth in its service. From its nature and its purpose it must affect the understanding: an inspired Apostle speaks of it as “enlightening the eyes of the understanding.”

It is impossible to conceive how the cultivation of the reasoning faculties can obstruct this influence. We have a beautiful parable in the Gospel, showing all the obstacles which prevent the good seed of the word from taking root in the heart. A cultivated understanding is not found among them. But we read of men, who are said to have “the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.” There is nothing then to prevent the conversion of enlightened men, that is not also, at least equally to be found in the ignorant—and if they are to be converted by the instrumentality of men, it requires no argument to show that the most efficient instrumentality is generally to be expected from the most enlightened.

If it be said that learning presents strong temptations, that it fosters pride and prejudice, that it is often sought from selfish and worldly considerations, we may readily admit it, and concede that, so sought, it is clearly inconsistent with the demands of the Gospel. Its path is the way of temptation. But what path of human duty will be found otherwise; and generally in proportion to the importance and arduousness of a duty, will be found the temptations that beset it. But the Christian soldier who goes onward, believing that “God is faithful and will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape” for him, resists a temptation to rest in ease and indolence, and neglect his Master’s service; and he, who through fear of temptation shrinks from the duty, yields himself to the snare of the tempter. Human learning, sought as an end, sought for the gratification of pride, or power, or pleasure, or profit, consists not with the claims of religion: but sought for God, sought in a meek and humble spirit, sought as a means of glorifying God and doing good to man, is a sanctified gift, is a talent offered to the Christian, which he must accept and use in his Master’s service.

It is so with every gift. What presents stronger temptations than riches, the love of which is said to be “the root of all evil?”

What sin more denounced than covetousness? yet who doubts that the acquisition of riches is allowable, and even laudable? It is enjoined upon Christians, that they should "work with their hands that they may have to give to him that needeth." Would the Apostle have forbidden them to work with their heads, from the same motive; that being thus enriched with the treasures of knowledge, they might have to give to him that needeth, gifts exceeding all the riches of the earth? This question might be settled by an appeal to facts. While some Christians have been doubting and speculating upon the subject, others have happily been exhibiting themselves as proofs of the perfect consistency between the highest attainments of learning and piety. Among the names that will never die, the men who have left behind them monuments more enduring than brass or marble, there are certainly to be found many who, in the pride of their hearts, or the profligacy of their lives, rejected the humbling and self-denying doctrines of the cross. But many more of those thus distinguished have been consistent and devoted Christians. There have been in all ages of the Church, men of superior piety, who have consecrated to the holy cause they served the very highest attainments of human learning, whose increasing knowledge taught them its proper lesson—increasing humility; who saw from the heights they had gained, a more extended prospect beyond them, not to be explored by man; and who saw in that vast view of things not to be known here, the proof of a higher state of existence hereafter. They have seen too, and shown to the world, that the more deeply they have been enabled to penetrate into the wonders that surround us, the more evident is the truth of the revelation given to us, and the more perfectly have they been enabled to "vindicate the ways of God to man."

That which has given to the cause of religion such advocates, and enabled them thus to promote the success of that cause, cannot be in conflict with its interests, or discountenanced by its precepts. Some detached passages of Scripture are supposed to exclude human learning from the acquirements proper to the Christian.

So St. Paul has been understood when he informs the Corinthians that he came to them not with "the excellency of speech or of wisdom," that he spoke to them "not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and in power,"—that "the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God,"—that "the

world by wisdom knew not God, and it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

The great Apostle of the Gentiles did not enter upon his ministry in any strength of his own. He looked not for success to what the world called wisdom, nor to the arts of the rhetorician, which it called eloquence or "excellency of speech." And this is all that he disclaims in these and similar passages.

That he regarded the suggestions of true wisdom, availed himself of his learning, and took care so to speak as to rouse the feelings, and teach the understanding of those who heard him, we know, from what we see in his addresses and from the effects which they produced. In this Epistle he thanks God that his Corinthian converts were in "every thing enriched by him, in all utterance and in all knowledge." "So that they came behind in no gift." He quoted and applied a passage from their poets to an Athenian audience; and he "reasoned" before Felix and made him tremble. Under the Old Testament dispensation the great leader of the Jews was allowed to become "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and our Lord had promised to his disciples "a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist." And accordingly, when Stephen answered for himself and his doctrines before the high priest, his address shows a thorough knowledge of the history and opinions, and hearts and lives of his Jewish hearers, so that "they were cut to the heart;" and when he disputed with the leaders of the synagogues, we are informed "they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spake."

It is true these powers were bestowed upon the first teachers of the Gospel by inspiration. Ignorant and unlearned men were immediately and miraculously qualified for their great work. In the present age of the Church God has seen fit to require that his people shall prepare themselves for his service by labour and study. Still the qualifications they acquire are no less his gifts, and they are to be sought and accepted in whatever way he may please to bestow them, and to be used under the influence and direction of his Spirit, for the same great work, the conversion of the world.

This is not required of all. To make these acquisitions is not within the reach of all. But all, to whom they are offered, should account it a blessing to be thus honoured; and all Christians, bound as they are by their profession to promote the success of the Gospel, should consider it a duty and a privilege to extend, as far as possible, the means of thus sustaining and defending it.

That portion of the Christian Church to which we belong has been permitted to give, as we should ever gratefully remember, many illustrious instances of the union of piety and learning. One of those, who has done much in the defence and confirmation of the truth, Bishop Horsley, thus expresses himself upon the subject we are considering :

“In all ages, if the objections of infidels are to be confuted ; if the scruples of believers themselves are to be satisfied ; if Moses and the Prophets are to be brought to bear witness to Jesus of Nazareth ; if the calumnies of the blaspheming Jews are to be repelled, and their misinterpretations of their own books confuted ; if we are to be ‘ ready,’ that is, if we are to be qualified and prepared, ‘ to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us ;’ a penetration in abstruse questions ; a quickness in philosophical discussion ; a critical knowledge of the ancient languages ; a familiar acquaintance with the Jewish history, and with all parts of the sacred writings ; a sound judgment ; a faithful memory, and a prompt elocution ; are talents, without which the work of an evangelist will be but ill performed. When they are not infused by inspiration, they must be acquired by diligence in study and fervency in prayer.”

“The Apostles,” he further says, “were profound metaphysicians, the best of moralists, well-informed historians, accurate logicians, and excellent in that strain of eloquence which is calculated for the conveyance of instruction, the enforcement of duty, the dissuasion of vice, the conviction of error and the defence of truth. And whoever pretends to teach without any of these qualifications, hath no countenance from the example of the Apostles, who possessed them all in an eminent degree, not from education, but from a higher source.”

If religion should disclaim this connexion, if she disarms herself of this power, can she annihilate it ? Will she be so unwise as to leave it in the hands of her enemies ? and has she any promise of miraculous aid to supply what her sloth and indifference will have lost ?

And who are the agents, in such a case, by whom this learned and ungodly world is to be converted ? If, as at the first, the illiterate are to be called to this work, (and what others will the Church have to offer ?) how, but by miracle, are they to be qualified for it ? An old divine observes, that if it be said “ God has no need of any man’s parts or learning,” it may be well answered, “ that he has less need of his ignorance and ill-behaviour.”

The Apostles in the early age of the Church, besides the gifts of learning and wisdom, were endowed with the gift of languages. Now, the missionaries who go forth to distant lands, as the messengers of peace, must apply labour and diligence to acquire the languages of those they would teach. Surely it is as evident a Christian duty to apply this labour and diligence in obtaining the necessary qualifications in one case as in the other. Miraculous interposition to supply what labour and diligence can accomplish, it is unreasonable to expect in any case. There are, however, extremes of error upon this subject, from which the cause of religion has greatly suffered;—from which, notwithstanding more correct views now generally prevail, it still suffers. If there is no longer an opposition in any denomination of Christians to the association of human learning with religion, there is yet in many a very inadequate estimate of its value, and too little zeal in promoting it. A Christian community that is not earnest in its efforts and liberal in its contributions to support establishments where such advantages can be gained, shows too plainly that it undervalues such advantages. When we look around us and hear the loud call for active and intelligent and influential members of the Church, and particularly for such as shall fill its sacred offices, and consider to how small a proportion of our youth the means of thus qualifying themselves to serve the cause of truth are limited, we are constrained to acknowledge, that we either do not see, or do not fulfil the just measure of our duty. The great and indispensable qualification for the ministry, is, undoubtedly, that renewal of the heart which is the work of the Holy Spirit. But if a pious ministry can be made more efficient by the aid of literature, and that aid is withheld by those who can afford it, they must answer for the neglect. The Church has passed through many seasons of fearful peril. In our own day we have seen the standard of infidelity openly displayed, and heard the daring boast of its champions that the Christian faith should fall before it. In those ranks were found many of the great and learned of the world; and all the arms that sophistry, and passion, and ingenuity, and ridicule could supply, were arrayed for the contest. But the Church had her champions—her great and learned gathered around her, and the powers of darkness were put to confusion. Had she discouraged learning in her sons, and disclaimed the aid of intellectual power, who can tell what would have been the result of the conflict?

And is she now without her enemies? Is not her citadel the

only hope and refuge of our race, still assailed, less openly, but more insidiously? And when did it more become her followers "to put on the whole armour of God," and stand forth in her defence?

And in the day to which the Christian looks with exultation—the long-promised day, the dawn of which is now breaking upon the nations, are we not forewarned that "perilous times shall come?" Know we not that the prince of this world will call out all his hosts, and struggle with all the strength of convulsive desperation to sustain his falling kingdom? Before the Church can put on her "beautiful garments" of praise and triumph, she must shine in the darkness of that conflict "bright as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." Before her sons shall stand forth as a resplendent host holding the palms of victory in their hands, those hands must wield, in holy warfare, the well-tempered weapons of truth.

The opposite error consists in undervaluing human acquirements.

There was a time when Christianity was deeply wounded by the prevalence of this error. And perhaps we must confess that our own Church, though her views as expressed in her formularies and doctrines were clear and Scriptural, was peculiarly exposed to its influence. Learning was made, not an aid to religion, but its substitute, and the preaching of the Gospel was too often merely a display of human erudition embellishing a cold morality. Men were allowed to take their stations at her altars who had no experience of the power of religion upon their hearts, and no other qualifications for the conversion of others, than the "enticing words of man's wisdom," disclaimed by St. Paul.

We rejoice to know that this profanation of the holy office is no longer tolerated—that her ministers are now expected to exhibit themselves as "ambassadors of God," having the "unction of the Spirit," declaring "the whole counsel of God," and speaking in all the power of intellect and in the simple earnestness which the heart dictates, to the hearts and consciences, as well as to the understandings of their hearers. Still the pride of learning, the love of human applause, and the subtle acts of the great adversary of man, present powerful temptations, requiring incessant watchfulness. It is difficult to be great, and successful, and applauded, and humble. It is easy and natural to place an undue estimate upon acquirements, when the mind feels the power and influence which they give it.

It may be well to inquire whether these dangers are not greatly aggravated by the manner in which mental cultivation is usually conducted, and by the means and motives employed in the progress of education—whether sincere Christians may not, in their zeal for attaining a great and allowable object, be making some sacrifice of their principles, and adopting some of the maxims of the world without due consideration.

If the youth of a literary institution see that their religious improvement is not the chief end and aim of their instructors—that the effort to make them Christians is formal and heartless, while to the lessons of the world's wisdom they are continually encouraged by setting before them, not “the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus,” but of academical honours—if motives so dangerous to our nature as pride and emulation are used to excite them to the labour and self-denial of study—if this is the course of discipline to which ardent and susceptible hearts are subjected, during the years of education, while the principles and habits are forming, can we wonder to see them come forth with the character of the scholar predominating over that of the Christian? They may be well prepared for the world, for they have been formed after its models. They may distinguish themselves in the strifes and competitions for worldly honours, for to that warfare they have been trained. But to glory in the cross of Christ, to bear the reproaches of the world, and to despise its baubles, to be meek and lowly in heart,—these are lessons they have yet to learn, and for which they have learned every thing calculated to unfit them.

When we know that so many of our public institutions are conducted, at least in some respects, upon principles such as these, what can we say but that literary attainments are acquired at a hazard and a price which religion can never sanction.

There is no necessity for this. Religion is the only true and sure foundation for every institution that is to fit man for the duties of life. The evidences and doctrines of Christianity may be impressed upon the understanding, and its holy influences brought to bear upon the affections throughout the progress of education. Her principles need be subjected to no compromise or sacrifice; her motives are all-sufficient. To the Christian student she presents a prize of unceasing animation, and help and strength from above to “hold up his goings in her paths.”

To the unconverted, what can be more important than to place them within the reach of the example and intercourse of the pious of their own age? where they will see living evidences of the

power of religion, receive the same instructions, be subjected to the same discipline, and become the objects of Christian care and sympathy to their instructors and fellow students ?

Where education is thus conducted, and means like these are used, every thing is done that man can do, and the blessing looked to from Him, in dependance upon whom, and for whom all is done, may be confidently expected.

The projectors and conductors of literary institutions too generally seem to entertain other views. They receive their pupils. They expect to be able, too often by the use of mere worldly means, to make them scholars. To make them Christians, they would say, must be the work of a higher power, and to that power they are content to leave it. Surely they forget that He, who alone can do this work, yet works by means ; condescends to employ in it the instrumentality of man, and has promised his help and favour to labours thus directed.

Where the two great objects of religious and literary instruction are properly united, and where the latter is made to stand, as it ought to do, in a station secondary and subordinate to the other, the temptations which are so apt to accompany the acquisition of learning are happily counteracted. There will be found no inconsistency in the motives or objects which such a course of education presents. While the heart is softened, the taste refined, and the reasoning powers exercised in the various pursuits of literature and science, there is no cause to apprehend that the lessons of religion will be rendered less efficient. Nor can youth so situated be insensible to that which pleads more successfully with man than all argument and precept—the beauty and the brightness of the Christian character shining around them in their companions and instructors.

Above all, when Christians, awakening at the call of duty, have established such an institution, and placed it in the charge of men with hearts devoted to the Redeemer's cause, willing to give themselves up to the work of preparing the rising generation for his service ; when from its hallowed walls, and from the rejoicing courts of Zion the prayer of faith shall ascend, how can we doubt that it will be answered with the benediction of heaven ?

Such an institution is here. Its first fruits are before us. And in the name of my distant Christian brethren, whose hearts have been gladdened by the reports of this work of faith and love, I offer thanks to the friends of Zion who have presented such an offering to be consecrated to her service.

Nor can I avoid declaring my approbation of the Christian courage and confidence with which this has been achieved. It is true, prudence requires, in such undertakings, that some previous preparation of means should be provided. But I do not consider it necessary, nor consistent with the religion we profess, to hold back the commencement of such a work, till adequate funds are in hand to accomplish all we may desire. In such a case, some reliance may well be placed on future help, to be supplied by its friends, as its wants may demand it. There need not be a hoard laid up, a sum invested in securities, as the world calls it, (though very insecure as the world often finds it,) sufficiently large to provide for its future operations without further assistance.

Enough for a beginning—to erect the necessary buildings and provide for present wants, it is reasonable to procure. When this is done, surely the influence of Christian feelings and principles may be looked to as a sufficient security to sustain it. Surely it is enough to pray for it, as we are taught to do for ourselves, not for hoarded treasures, but for daily bread. This prayer will, I trust, be heard and answered, and a liberal supply of its present wants encourage us to trust, with increasing confidence, for the future.

The scene now before us is interesting—such an assembly met to do honour to the cause of God and man, to give its countenance and support to such an institution, to encourage and animate the labours and efforts of its teachers, pupils and patrons; the youth to whom we are to look as the strength and glory of our land in future days, who are here preparing themselves to go forth as “lights of the world,” present a spectacle which, even to a heathen, who would say, “*humani nihil alienum mihi*,” would not be an object of indifference.

But what is such a scene to that which faith, not fancy, unveils to the eye that looks into futurity?—to the eye that looks beyond this small beginning, not to the end, but to the never-ending progress of a work destined to bless the world and give joy in heaven for ever?—to the eye that has long mourned over the desolations of Zion, and is now permitted to see how her solitary places are to be made glad, and her wildernesses to “blossom as the rose?” When our favoured land, throughout all her borders, shall exult in the full light of Gospel day—when, as far as the adventurous foot of man shall pierce her forests, the heralds of salvation shall go forth, and the songs of Zion shall be heard, till

"The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,"—

And when this light shall be borne from our bright and happy shores to "the dark places of the earth,"—then, among the Christian host that shall have achieved these triumphs, may there be found the names of many who were reared in this nursery of the Church, equipped in this armoury of God.

And now, my young friends, I cannot refrain from availing myself of the liberty you have given me, by saying a few words in conclusion to you. You have called on one to address you, to whom often, in his retrospections of the past, it has occurred to imagine what would be his course, if he could take his place among you and be again permitted to begin the journey of life.

He cannot call back the past—go over again, with corrected views and subdued feelings and never-failing help, the days he has wasted, nor regain opportunities of improvement that are lost for ever. But he can entreat you, as his Christian brethren, to do as he vainly wishes he had done—that you may never have the shame of looking back upon neglected time and abused mercies.

Much of the sin and misery of the world would be avoided, if the young could be persuaded to believe the testimony of those who have gone before them, and learn wisdom from the experience of others. This is the great difficulty to overcome in the work of education. That there should be such a difficulty; that intelligent beings about to enter upon the untried path of life should refuse the guidance of those who have travelled it before them, when there is no doubt as to the superiority of their knowledge, and no ground to question the sincerity of their counsels, is one among many proofs of the darkness of the natural understanding, and of the power of the delusions to which we are exposed. The world cannot account for it, and has no cure for it. Religion alone explains it and applies the remedy.

Some of you have received this explanation, sought and found this remedy. Others are, perhaps, unconscious that there is any thing in their nature requiring either explanation or remedy—or if conscience has sometimes spoken too plainly to be misunderstood, you have considered it unnecessary to enter upon such an inquiry so soon. You are brought here together for the common purpose of qualifying yourselves for the duties and trials of a life of which you can know but little. Those who have felt a deep

interest in your welfare, have thought it best that you should be thus associated, and they have adopted a system of instruction calculated (as they believe) for your common benefit.

Their first object is to send you forth as Christians, and secondly as Christians accomplished and strengthened with all those acquirements of learning that may make you "perfect in every good word and work," and "ready always to give to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you." If they shall be permitted to succeed in their chief purpose, much will be gained in favour of the second. Christian principles and habits will infuse the diligence and self-denial necessary for the student; the help of Omnipotence to which he may look in all his difficulties, will be "always sufficient" for him; gratitude for unspeakable mercies will make his labours easy and delightful; and the Christian prize ever in his view, will animate him to perseverance.

The world can present nothing to the mind of man comparable to these means and inducements. Let their superiority be manifested by your exhibition of their fruits. And when pride and emulation, and the unhallowed passions of the world, are urging its votaries to the strife for literary distinctions, let it be seen that while you disclaim such motives, and are indifferent to such honours, you are animated to superior efforts, under a holier influence, and for a brighter prize; that "they do it, to obtain a corruptible crown, but you an incorruptible." I have endeavoured to set before you the advantages of literature, its importance as a part of the Christian's armour, and its dangers when unassociated with religious principles. Look at the men who have been eminent for piety, and have employed their cultivated talents in the cause of religion, and compare them with those who have prostituted to unworthy purposes these valuable gifts, and say which you would most desire to resemble. The men who have devoted their lives to promote the happiness of others, whose labours have been directed to the defence of the truth, and the extension of religion, we should expect to find influenced by the principles they endeavour to impress upon others, and enjoying that happiness those principles are so well calculated to confer. And such will be found to be the case. Although their outward circumstances, like those of other men, were subject to all the vicissitudes of this mortal state, and they have had to bear their full share of the troubles of life, yet have they very generally been enabled to "go on their way rejoicing," strong in the "faith that overcometh the world," and taught them, "in whatsoever state they were, there-

with to be content." Such men, besides having a richer relish of all the blessings of life, have enjoyed in the highest degree "the greatest of all luxuries, that of doing good ; and their peaceful lives and triumphant deaths, have borne testimony to the truths they felt and taught.

They rest from their labours, and God is thanked for having given them as blessings to the world. Not so with the perverters of learning—"There is no peace to the wicked." And to the wicked abusers of high mental endowments, and eminent acquirements there are peculiar causes of disquietude and misery. Their sensibilities are more acute, and the stings of conscience more severe. They have no fixed principles to guide them through life, no sources of consolation in trouble, no restraint upon the passions, no shield against temptations. They enjoy the admiration of the world, but are strangers to the peace and joy that the world knoweth not ; living "without hope and without God in the world," they find life a burden, and dare not look to death for a refuge.

Such is the power of literature, and such the contrast exhibited in the lives of those who have used or abused it for the happiness or misery of themselves and their fellow creatures. Such is the earthly record of their history. We need not pierce the veil of futurity to learn their different destinies in that great day of retribution which was the hope of the one, and the dread of the other. The lesson taught us by the comparison of their lives on earth will be sufficiently awakening.

Let it then be your care to guard this great power which your present situation enables you to acquire, by seeking it and employing it under the influence and direction of the religion you profess.

You, particularly, who aspire to the honour of being "put in trust with the Gospel"—the highest honour that can be conferred on man—who feel in your hearts that He who has been pleased to "call you out of darkness into his marvellous light," hath also called you by his Spirit to stand forth as his "ministers of reconciliation" to a fallen race : you should consider it, not merely as permitted to you to reach forward to the full attainment of all the power that mental improvement can give you, but as an obligation imposed upon you to fit you for the service of Him who has thus called you. Seek it as subservient to religion—as a talent to be employed in your great work and in your master's service, and you may seek it with all the ardour its attainments de-

mands. Fear not to dive deep into the mysterious nature of the things within you and around you.

“Who most examine, most believe.”

Labour to carry to its utmost improvement every faculty that God hath given you, every thing that may aid you in the perception of truth and in the communication of it to others. Labour for whatever may give you power—procure over the hard heart, and the closed ear, power, so to speak, that the sinner shall hear, the sleeper shall wake, the dead shall live.

That you may avail yourselves of the advantages thus afforded you, fulfil your various duties as students here, and be prepared for your duties hereafter, you are provided with instructors, to whose authority and friendly care and counsel you may look with confidence and affection.

One most important obligation imposed by your peculiar situation here, relates to your fellow students. They will here be instructed in the evidences and doctrines of Christianity. From this course of study, and from the Bible, they may learn much of religion. But much of the effect of their studies and of what they may think and feel upon the subject, will depend upon you. In the daily intercourse of a college life, they will not fail to see and note what religion has done for you. Those who have withstood all other means of grace, have often yielded to the power of religion manifested in their associates. Put on, then, for your own sakes and for their's, all the “beauty of holiness.” Watch against every thought and emotion that may tarnish the brightness of that Christian character which you should continually present before them. Let them see that the principles you profess, live and grow in you—that you have a peace which passeth their understanding—that you have found a hidden treasure, filling your hearts with joy, in which you desire them and all mankind to participate. Let them experience in their intercourse with you the unvarying and patient tenderness of the charity so beautifully described by the Apostles, that “suffereth long and is kind,” “that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,” and “never faileth.” Let them see this, and they will be unable to doubt either the truth, or the power, or the inestimable value of religion. This teaching, above all others, reaches the heart. The Christian friends who surround you here this day, rejoice in the anticipation that you will thus acquit yourselves here, and that you will go forth from these walls, thus qualified for your high office, the gifted sons of this institution, the hope of

the Church, a blessing to your country and “to the ends of the earth.” Thus looking upon you with affectionate solicitude they pray, in the language of the Apostle, “that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment—that you may approve things that are excellent—that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.” Then shall they rejoice in that day, that in rearing this fortress of the Christian faith, they “have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”

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